MATTHEW 13:5-6.

Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

We have already considered one of those sorts of ground that the seed, that the Savior sowed, fell upon, viz., the wayside, and what became of the seed that fell there.

I am now [come] to the second sort of ground mentioned in the parable, which is spoken of in the two verses that have been now read. And therefore, in these words may be observed:

I. The description of the ground. 'Tis said to be stony ground or stony places, where there is not much earth; i.e. the ground was nothing but a rock, excepting a thin covering of earth, which is one degree beyond the former sort of ground that the seed fell upon, viz. the wayside, which was hard both above and beneath, like a path that had been trodden upon so long that the very surface was become exceeding hard. But the ground spoken of here is a little different. 'Tis as hard as that, but the hardness is not on top; but underneath there is a thin covering or sprinkling of earth here upon the rock, so that just at the top of the ground it is not so hard, though underneath it is a mere rock.

[II.] We may observe how the seed grows, that is sown, in such ground. It sprung up forthwith, because it had not deepness of earth, “and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.”

III. What becomes of that growth at last.
I would insist on each of these in their order, insist on the description of the ground. And from this, first, I would raise this proposition, viz.,

That the hearts of some of the hearers of the Word preached, are like a rock with a thin covering of earth.

That which here in Matthew is expressed “stony places,” is in Luke called “a rock.” Luke 8:6, “And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered, because it lacked moisture.”

There are many of the hearers of the Word preached, whose hearts are like a rock with a very thin covering of earth. Because, however they have some superficial impressions made upon them and the hardness of their hearts are as it were hid, yet their hearts indeed remain as hard as a rock. And therefore in speaking to this proposition, I would observe,

First. How the minds of such hearers may be impressed and affected.

Second. That the impressions are superficial, and not deep so as to reach the bottom of the heart.

Third. That notwithstanding those impressions, their hearts still remain as hard as a rock.

Fourth. How their hardness of heart is covered and hidden from observation.

First. I would observe how the minds of such hearers may be impressed and affected.

1. They may have a sort of belief of the things that they hear. ‘Tis said in Christ’s explanation of this parable, that they receive the Word, they hear the Word, and even will say, “[I] receive it.” They do in some sort receive the Word as true in the explanation of the same parable in the eight chapter of Luke. ‘Tis said, “they believe for a while.” There are three sorts
of belief that men have of the truth of the things they hear in the Word: two of 'em false, and one true.

(1) There is that assent that men give to the doctrines of the Word of God as true, merely from education or tradition from their forefathers, not from any proper conviction, or because they see the evidence of the truth of those doctrines. But they are told by their parents that they are true, and they are told so by ministers, and that is the voice of all about them. And that is what they have heard ever since they can remember, and therefore, they assent to it; they never look into it to see whether it be so or no, but customarily allow it.

(2) There is a further degree of assent that persons may give to the truth of the Word, from the natural force of arguments and persuasions set before them. They may hear the Word powerfully preached with strong arguments, set forth in a very forcible manner that may naturally prevail upon them to assent to the things that are spoken as true. And,

(3) There is a conviction of the truth of the things of the Word arising from a spiritual understanding of them in their divine authority and excellency, which is a saving belief.

'Tis the second of these three kinds of belief that is ascribed to the stony-ground hearers, of whom Christ says, "they believe for a while." The wayside hearers may have the first sort, viz. that assent or belief of the truth of the gospel which men have merely by tradition or education. But the stony-ground hearers have a belief that is something beyond, that there is something set before them in the preaching of the Word that gains their assent a degree beyond what they yielded from education. It may be the preacher makes use of very plentiful arguments, he seems to reason very strongly, and his arguments are set forth in a very earnest and forcible manner, so that they are overpowered for the present and can't but say, "These things must be true." And sometimes the air of sincerity and fervency
that is in the preacher, his positiveness and the authority with which he seems to speak, overcomes them, and makes them think that these things that he speaks are not mere fables and fancies. This man, that speaks with such positiveness and fervency, sees and knows 'em to be true.

There were many such kind of believers in Christ’s time. When they heard Christ preach with such authority and see his miracles, they could not but confess that the things he spake were true, and yet, never were true believers. John 2:23-24, “Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.”

Oftentimes there is a degree of the common influence of the Spirit of God assisting men’s natural reason, to impress a common conviction of the truth of the great things of religion with the greater power upon the mind. And the consequence of such a common conviction? Oftentimes, the hearers’ being awakened and made considerably sensible of their sin and misery. The awakenings that persons have, before their conversions, are always attended with this sort of belief of the truth of the doctrine of the Word of God.

2. They may have joy in the hearing of the Word preached. This is the other thing that Christ mentions in his explication of the parable. They hear the Word, and even with joy receive it. They may have rejoicing of two sorts:

(1) They may be greatly pleased and delighted with the preaching, and yet have no joy in the things preached. They may be taken with the manner of preaching. They may admire the clearness of illustration; it may be very pleasing to them to have things well cleared up that before were matters of difficulty to them. They may be greatly taken with the clear interpretation of sacred Scripture, to hear difficult and obscure passages of sacred
Scripture plainly opened to their understanding, and to hear a satisfying interpretation given.

They may be greatly pleased with the strength of reason; they may admire the clear way of arguing that is used.

They may be exceedingly taken with the eloquence of the preacher, and may be ready to cry out concerning him, “Never man spoke like this man!” They may be pleased with the aptness of expression, and with the fervency, and liveliness, and beautiful gestures of the preacher and his becoming manner of address; they may be very greatly taken with those things, especially when they are new. A preacher may be to them, on these accounts, as an excellent musician, one that is an admirable singer with a sweet melodious voice, or an excellent player on an instrument. So of old, the Jews were taken with Ezekiel’s preaching. Ezek. 33:32, “And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.”

This sort of hearers we are speaking of, may be greatly affected with the manner of preaching and may shed many tears. They may be filled with admiration, and may be elevated almost beyond themselves, may never have enough of commending the preacher, may be almost ready to follow the preacher to the ends of the earth, and to come and say, as some of Christ’s hearers did, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest” [Luke 9:52].

Men may admire excellent preaching, as they may admire excellent handwriting or the work of an excellent carpenter or joiner, and yet, one be as much the mere working of nature as the other.

(2) They may have a sort of joy in the things preached. They may have, from mere natural principles, a kind of delight in many things that we are instructed in the Word of God. It can as easily be explained how a natural man shall be affected and moved with the wonderful account of Christ’s sufferings, and in having his wonderful love to sinners in it livelily set
forth, as it can be explained how a man should be moved and much pleased with an affecting romance. Men may be pleased and delighted to hear many things that do concern the glory of heaven. Men may be very much raised with joy in things that they hear preached from a mistaken notion they have, that they have an interest in them. A man that thinks that he is dear to God may be very much raised with joy, when he hears preaching about the wonderful love of God to his saints. A man that thinks that Christ died for him may be elevated with hearing of the dying love of Christ, and may in hearing those things have a kind of affectionate gratitude or love stirred up in them towards God and Christ. We see that natural men sometimes are really much affected with the kindness that other men show to them. And it can as easily be explained how they may, only from the principles of nature, be affected with the kindness that they think God or Christ have shown to them. If there be any men of mean condition, that is much taken notice of by some great man that is much above him, and he looks on that great man as his entire friend, this will wonderfully tend to win the heart of the mean man. And so, if a man thinks that the great God loves him and that Christ has died for him, his heart may be much affected with gratitude and a kind of love. The Pharisees of old that had that thought, that they were very dear to God, had a great zeal for God in their way. The Galatians were ready to cry out when they heard Paul preach, “O, what a blessedness is it,” and were so moved that they could e’en be willing to pluck out eyes, etc. “Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me,” Gal. 4:15. And yet, the Apostle was after that in doubt concerning ‘em, v. 11.² Men may be in a kind of rapture, and find great inclination to praise God, and yet [it may be the mere workings of nature]. And so we read of the Jews, “when the multitude saw it, they glorified God,” Matt. 9:8 and Mark 2:12. Thus the
minds of those hearers spoken of in the text, may be impressed and affected in hearing the Word.

Second. But those impressions are superficial and don’t reach the bottom of the heart. As the seed that was sown in the stony ground, sunk in but a very little way, before it came to a rock, that it could go no further. Though it was not just there, as it was with the seed that fell by the wayside, or on the hard path, where it made no impression at all; yet here, the seed lay very near the surface. The wayside hearers ben’t affected at all by what they hear. The stony-ground hearers are affected, but their affections are only as it were in the surface of their hearts and don’t reach the bottom of the heart, and therefore are really hypocritical affections. Like Saul’s affections towards David, when [he] seemed to be so much moved with David’s kindness in sparing his life, when he had a fair opportunity to kill him, and cried and lift up his voice, and wept out, “Is this thy voice, my son David?” [1 Sam. 24:16]. Saul was really affected, but yet it was an hypocritical affection, for it was superficial. There were not only affectionate words, calling him his son, but many tears with his words. The affection was not deep, for it did not at all remove the old leaven of hatred that was in Saul’s heart against David; that remained whole in him. Still the wound was not cured, it was only palliated and skinned over, and therefore it soon broke out again, and Saul was soon after seeking David’s life again.

So the affections that natural men have in hearing the Word, are only as it were on the outside of the heart; they don’t penetrate it very far to remove the old and rooted enmity against God, the pride, the carnality that they brought into the world with them. Natural men sometimes are in a tender frame: they are apt to be affected with what they hear in preaching, and they are apt to be affected too with what they hear in private conversation about the things of religion; and they are apt to be affected in their secret prayers, and tears flow very easy. This looks as if they had a very soft
heart and as though the ground was mellow. But the yieldableness of the ground is on the surface only; if you pierce it, you presently come to a hard rock.

The faith or holiness of such hearers of the Word is superficial. They seem for the present to give a free assent to the things that they hear, that they are true. They can't but acknowledge that they are true, but yet they have no belief that is to be depended on; they ben't thoroughly convinced of their truth, they don't believe with all their hearts, and so their joy and their gratitude, and admiration and their tears, are all flashy outside things that [are] not arising from the innermost parts of the heart.

Third. Notwithstanding those superficial impressions, their hearts still remain as hard as a rock. They come into the world with hearts of stone and those impressions are far from turning their hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. A man's being much affected, is no certain sign that his heart is broken; men's hearts are oftentimes like a rock in the midst of tears. Their hearts remain as a rock with respect to the following things:

1. They are so as to any spiritual sense of divine things. Notwithstanding all their affections, they are destitute of any spiritual knowledge of God, any real insight into the glorious nature of the things of the gospel, as a stone that perceives nothing at all. They hear of the excellency and glory of God's holiness, but they see no glory or beauty in it. They hear of the glorious way of salvation by Christ that abases man, and exalts free grace, but they see no glory in it. Though the excellency of Christ be so exceeding great to ravish [the soul], yet they know not what it means. They see no form or comeliness or beauty, wherefore they {should desire him [Is. 53:2]}. They perceive nothing of [the] sweet and excellent savor of divine things, whereby they are as the most refreshing and nourishing, strengthening food to the gracious soul. They have no taste to relish that sweetness, any more than an image of stone could taste honey. If
you should put it into its mouth, it perceives nothing [of] that fragrant odor of the sweet ointments of Christ Jesus, anymore than images of stone that have noses and smell not.

They perceive no more of that divine luster that is in the gospel of Christ, than an image with artificial eyes of glass would perceive the sun’s brightness if you should bring it and sit it in the sunshine.

2. The heart still remains hard as to any true love to God. The hearts of the saints are sometimes filled with the love of God, as with an inward divine flame that causes them to burn within them. And this holy flame does as it were dissolve and melt the heart. The heart at sometimes as it were melts with complacence and delight in God, and is drawn forth in love to him.

But the hearts of this sort of hearers are not dissolved and drawn; they are as cold as a stone as to any true love, and remain obstinate in their enmity against God.

3. They are hard as to any godly sorrow and mourning. They may have tears of a kind of sorrow for sin, but they ben’t with any true brokenness of heart and poverty of spirit. They see nothing of the great evil of sin as committed against God, and their hearts are as hard as a rock as to any mourning for it upon that account.

4. Their hearts remain as hard as a rock in their pride and self-exaltation. They are stiff-necked and will not bow and humble themselves before God; though they have affections, yet they exalt themselves in these affections and make a righteousness of them. They are self-sufficient and self-dependent, and will not abase themselves at God’s feet as they ought to do.

5. Their hearts remain as a rock with respect [to] the unsuitedness of their wills to God’s will: and that both with respect to submission to God’s disposing will, and obedience to his commanding will. They are far from being brought to a disposition to deny and renounce themselves for God, and to
yield themselves entirely to God. They stiffly oppose the sovereignty of God; they can’t find a heart to yield, that God should be the sovereign disposer of all things, to do with all according to his own good pleasure. It is a lesson that they can’t learn; it can’t be beat into them, anymore than into a stone, that ‘tis man’s reasonable duty in everything to submit to God, nor can they be induced to embrace God’s whole law without exception of any one command.

I come now, to the Fourth thing, viz., that though the hearts of such hearers remain thus hard, yet their hardness of heart is commonly inward and hid. As the rock in the parable that we are upon was not seen because it was skinned over with earth, so this temporary faith and those superficial affections that have been spoken of do commonly hide the hardness of men’s hearts.

1. They hide them from themselves, so that they can’t see the hardness of their own hearts. When they have no affections at all, then, it may be, they will allow that their hearts are hard. But when they seem to be in a tender frame and can shed tears, they don’t see how their hearts can be said to be so hard. They are pleased and taken then, that their hearts are melted and dissolved. Their superficial affections in hearing the Word, and their tears in private duty, do dreadfully blind and make ‘em have a wrong thought of themselves. It looks to them that others that they see, that seem not to be at all affected, are very hard-hearted, and they are ready to wonder how they can be so: but they have quite other thoughts of themselves. They can look back and remember when they were unaffected, and are ready to wonder at their former hardness; but now it seems to them they are much mended, and that they have better hearts than they used to have. Their affections are as it were the skin with which their wound is skinned over and makes ‘em think it is cured, or at least that it is in a much better state than it used to be.
They make a righteousness of their affections. They are the fig leaves with which they hide their nakedness from themselves, though they can’t hide them from God. And so their hearts, instead of being broken and melted with those superficial affections, are prevented from being broken, for the hardness of their hearts is hid by it. It is needful in order to the hardness of heart’s being removed, that it should first be known: the disease must be perceived before it is cured. This outside softness, this thin layer of earth, does defend the rock and deadens the stroke of the hammer of God’s law, which otherwise might break the rock in pieces.

And if oftentimes persons are deceived by those superficial affections, and think ‘em true grace, and go away with that opinion of themselves that they are saints, and their condition is safe, then they dreadfully harden the heart, and above all things make it unyieldable to the force of the hammer that should break it.

2. These affections oftentimes hide men’s hardness of heart from others. When men see others that seem to be wholly unaffected with the great things they hear in the preaching of the Word, they are ready to call ‘em poor, hard-hearted wretches. But when we see [them] affected from time to time, we are ready to have an high opinion of ‘em.

Some, with their temporary faith and their superficial affections, make a shining profession. They go forth with the wise virgins with a shining lamp to meet the Bridegroom, and others mistake ‘em for real saints, and sometimes for eminent saints; and it may be are never discovered till the midnight cry is heard, till the great Judge comes, whose eyes are a flame of fire, who can’t be deceived, and will search the heart and will see not only its outside but search it to the bottom, and will know the ground, whether it be earth or rock, and will see through all false coverings, and will strip off the fig leaves and will bring to light the innermost recesses of his soul, and show what every man is indeed in the sight of all angels and men.
Use I, of Self-examination. Let what you have heard under this proposition put you upon examining yourselves as to the following particulars.

First. Let it put you upon examining your belief of the doctrine of the gospel. We all know that men can’t be saved unless they are believers, and that in order to that, they must believe that the gospel is true. They must believe that the sacred Scriptures are the Word of God, and they must believe that Christ is the Son of God, and that the accounts that we have of his incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension in heaven are true.

Second. Let this put you upon examining the joy you have in the hearing of the Word. There are many of you, I doubt not, but have had joy in the hearing the Word preached. You have felt well under the preaching of it, and it may be sometimes have been so moved that the tears have flowed freely.

Examine and try, whether or no, your joy has only been that sort of joy that is in stony-ground hearers. Has it not been more a delight in the manner of preaching, than a rejoicing in the thing preached? Was the pleasure you had principally in the eloquence and aptness, fervency and becoming delivery of the speaker, more than in the divine excellency of the things that were spoken? Some men, when they hear preaching concerning God and Christ, are filled with affections and admiration, but ’tis the preacher and not God that it terminates upon. They are filled with admiration of the minister, but are not filled with admiration of joy [in] Christ. If there be a religious joy in them, it is joy in the minister more than rejoicing in God.

And then, if you have had some joy in the things preached, strictly examine what kind of joy that is. And particularly, examine your joy in the things preached in two particulars:

1. Whether your joy be the joy of faith, i.e. whether you rejoice in the great things of the gospel that you hear, as being convinced of the truth
of them. Men may have a great deal of pleasure in reading or hearing a pleasant fable, and yet think it a fable at the same time; and many may have a great deal of affection in hearing the gospel preached, and yet have no sound conviction of the certain truth and reality of what he hears. Such joy is very flashy and superficial, and very different from that joy that a person has in hearing the Word when it is mixed with faith in the hearing, when he sees the truth of what he hears.

2. Whether your joy be, firstly, from the sense of the divine excellency of the things you hear, or only from the consideration of your interest in them. This is a very great and main difference between the joy of true saints and the joy of hypocrites. Hypocrites, when they hear of the wonderful things of the gospel, of God’s great love in sending his Son, of Christ’s dying love to sinners, and the great things that he has purchased and promised to the saints, they very much rejoice and be lighted up with what they hear. If their joy be examined, it will be found to have no other foundation but this, that they look upon these things [as] theirs. They rejoice in hearing of the wonderful love of Christ, but ‘tis not on the account of the excellency and glory of his love in it, but only as they are the objects of it. They find a kind of love to Christ, but ‘tis only as they conceive of him as making much of them.

But a true saint rejoices in the glorious things of the gospel as glorious in themselves, though the consideration of his interest in them is not excluded. The saint may and ought to rejoice in his interest in them, but this is not the first spring of his joy; but ‘tis the innate excellency of the things in themselves considered. The first foundation of the delight he has in God is His own perfection. The first foundation of the delight he has in Christ is His own beauty; he appears in Himself the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely. The way of salvation by Christ is a delightful way to him. He loves it, he loves to hear of it, loves to
contemplate the holiness, the wisdom, the fitness, and wonderful and sovereign grace of this way. The doctrine of the gospel about Christ and free grace through him, about Christ’s satisfaction and righteousness, about men’s emptiness and Christ’s fullness, are delightful, glorious doctrines in his eye: and this is the reason that he has joy in hearing them preached.

The joy of the stony-ground hearers is joy in themselves, and not joy in God. They rejoice that they are well in’t, that ‘tis not with them as ‘tis with others. They rejoice that God has such respect to them and makes so much of them, and so they can hear Christ’s dying love, and the joys of heaven, and the sovereign grace of God to sinners livelily and eloquently set forth with a great deal of pleasure, for all this exalts them. Who are all these great things for, but themselves? Certainly ‘tis enough to make ‘em feel well, to think that they are made so much of—and so their joy is really joy in themselves.

But the saints’ joy is in God. Indeed, they rejoice in their interest in God, and that Christ is theirs, and so they have great reason to: but their joy don’t begin here. This is not the first spring of their joy; they first rejoice in God as excellent and glorious in himself, and then, secondarily, rejoice in it that this glorious God is theirs. They first have their hearts filled with joy: from the view of Christ’s excellency, the wonderfulness of his grace and the gloriousness of the way of salvation; and then they have a secondary joy in that, that so excellent a Savior, such excellent grace, is theirs.

The joy of the stony-ground hearers is in a contrary order. They first conceive of God and Christ as being theirs, and loving them for some of their good qualities or good deeds; and that after they conceive them as loving them, and making much of them, they fancy they can see loveliness in them. They first imagine that the dying love of Christ is to them, and then upon that foundation they can see an excellency in that dying love. And no wonder
at all that they can see an excellency in that love, that is so well-placed
to suit them.

That joy of the saints that they have in hearing the Word is from an
inward savor of the Word of God, the word of the gospel, as the excellent
food of their souls. They have a new nature in them that relishes it and has
a continual appetite after it, and is refreshed and strengthened and
nourished by it, and is satisfied in it as its proper food. Set what you will
before it, if you deny this food, you can’t satisfy or content it. The Word
of God is to them a savor of life unto life; ‘tis a refreshing, life-giving
savor, ‘tis a sweet odor that revives the drooping spirit, restores the
fainting soul. Oftentimes, when the soul seems to languish and is almost
ready to faint, this savor will at once put new life and strength into it.
Such a kind of rejoicing in the Word of God, is an exceeding different thing
from the joy of those whose hearts are as the stony ground. Men may shed a
great many tears, and yet be wholly ignorant of this inward, refreshing,
life-giving savor of the Word of God. They may know no more what it means
than a man born blind knows what you mean, when you tell him of the
pleasantness and beauty of the colors of the rainbow.

A heart that is as stony ground knows not what is the sweetness that a
soul enjoys, that has the love of God shed abroad in it by the Holy Ghost.
This is a very different thing from those superficial raptures that
hypocrites sometimes may have, as the children of Israel at the Red Sea when
they sang God’s praise, and the Jews when they glorified God, that had given
such power unto men. The false-hearted professor knows not what inward
burning of heart is with a holy and divine fervor, a pure flame of love to
Christ—sometimes from one sweet word dropped in manifesting the excellent
holiness and grace of God, or some other divine perfection.

Thirdly. Another thing, with respect to which you should take occasion
to examine yourself from what has been said, is whether your religious
affections are only superficial, or whether they reach the bottom of the heart. This is to be tried by two things: the one is the cause, and the other the effect.

1. You may try whether your affections are more than superficial by the cause, by inquiring whether they come in by the conviction of the understanding. Are you affected with the things that you hear, because you have [been] let into an understanding of them as certainly true?

Inquire what is the foundation of your sorrow and repentance. Is it that you are convinced of the great evil of sin against God, that it is above all things unreasonable and hateful?

Inquire what is the foundation of your affections of love and joy. Is it because you are convinced that God is the most excellent being, and that he is the best portion, that there is happiness to be found in him and in no other?

2. You must try whether your affections are only superficial, or whether they reach the bottom of your heart by their effect, by inquiring whether they have such power upon your heart as to dispose it to give up yourself to God without reserve. Do your affections of sorrow for sin go so deep into your heart, as thoroughly to dispose you to renounce and forsake all sin and utterly deny every lust?

Does your affection of love go so deep into your heart, as thoroughly to incline your heart to forsake all for God—all your worldly pursuits, pleasures, and the esteem of men, and every temporal thing? And does it so prevail in your heart as to incline it fully to give yourself up to God’s service, and to follow Christ wherever he goes? Does your affection of joy go deep into your heart, as to cause your heart to take up its rest in Christ, as being contented in him for your portion?

If your religious [affections] go to the bottom of your heart, they will get possession of your whole heart; otherwise they will leave your heart
divided between God and mammon, between Christ and your own righteousness. You [will] be willing to forsake some sin, but not all; you will be willing to be partly God’s, but not wholly; you will be willing to be his a little while, but not forever; you will be willing to take up with Christ as part of your portion, but not your whole portion, without having the world too along with him. You will be willing to have heaven as one part of your inheritance, but not all, but will insist upon having heaven and the world too. And so your affections will come to nothing; they will have no saving effect at all upon you.

Use II is of Exhortation, in two branches:

First. Not to trust to your superficial religious affection.

There are two ways of trusting to those affections that men are commonly guilty of, both which are very dangerous, and have proved the ruin of many souls.

1. Some [are] deceived by them, and take them to be evidences of true grace in their heart. When persons are thus deceived about [their affections], they trust in them in the highest degree. That natural man that has anything that he mistakes for true grace he will depend, he will make a righteousness of it. If he thinks he has true holiness of his own, this will be righteousness enough with him; he’ll look no further; he’ll never seek after the righteousness of Christ.

There is no creature in the world so self-righteousness as he that thinks himself godly, when he is not–none are so proud of their righteousness. He thinks he has good warrant to depend upon it, for God has promised his favor to those that are truly gracious. True holiness is God’s own image, and God has abundantly declared his delight in sincere holiness. And therefore, can an unhumbled heart do any other than trust in that which he thinks is true holiness? Such as are thus deceived are wont so to depend on their supposed holiness, as to look very excellent in their own eyes upon
the account of it; and not understanding the way of salvation by Christ’s righteousness, they depend on it. [It] is that which they suppose firstly recommends ‘em to the favor of God.

And they depend upon it so as to neglect so much as to seek after anything further. Yea, they are wont to depend upon it so as to encourage themselves in a wicked life by it, and to presume on the foundation of their hope to allow themselves in neglect of known duty and the commission of known sins. Therefore, beware of this way of trusting in superficial affections.

2. Another way of trusting in such affections, is trusting in them to move God to give ‘em grace. Many that seek conversion do thus trust in their religious affections. When they can be affectionate in their prayers, they take great encouragement from it, really hoping that now God’s heart will be moved. They think, when they pray affectionately, that they pray very acceptably, and can’t but think that it will move open the bowels of a merciful God to compassionate their case. And so, upon the same account, they are taken with it when they find themselves affected in hearing the Word.

And there is nothing that natural persons are more strongly inclined to make a righteousness of, than their religious affections.

But you must consider that those affections don’t make you a whit the better in God’s sight. Though the rock is hid from your sight and from the sight of your neighbor, by the sprinkling of dirt there is over it, yet it is not at all hid from God’s sight. It don’t look like good ground in his eyes, who sees through the covering.

Your most affectionate duties are an abomination to God. He abhors those prayers that you make the most of; for that which is highly esteemed amongst man, is an abomination in the sight of God. If you should bring a piece of carrion as a present to a king or some great man, and offer it to him to eat, it would not be the more acceptable to him for being painted over with fine colors. The religious affections of natural men is but a painting
of their own dung, or a sweetening of their own vomit, which can never make it acceptable food to God. God sees the rotten heart; he knows there is no sincerity. Persons are very often deceived with their own tears; men are ready to make much of them through the ignorance of their own hearts, that at the same time their eyes pour forth tears, do pour out their filthiness as a fountain castest forth her waters. The

Second exhortation, is to seek that you may have a soft and tender heart. The hearts of some natural men are more stupid than others: some of them are without any religious affections, and are like the wayside; and some have great religious affections. But the heart of every natural man is a heart of stone. The heart is not changed from being an heart of stone, till God takes away the heart of stone and gives an heart of flesh in the new birth. The heart of every natural man is like a rock; all the difference is that in some natural men the rock lies bare, and in others it is thinly sprinkled over with earth.

The hearts of all men are in God’s hands, and there are some in which he is pleased to work so great a change, as to turn the heart of stone into an heart of flesh, to turn the rock into mellow ground.

We read of Josiah, that his heart was tender, II Kgs. 22: 19—such a soft and tender heart. Here, consider the great advantages of having such an heart.

1. A truly soft and tender heart has life in it. A heart of flesh may have life, but ‘tis impossible that a heart of stone should, which is more dead than a stone. So dead is the heart of every natural man: it is dead as to any spiritual perceptions; it has no sight or taste or feeling or understanding of spiritual things, and it is dead as to spiritual action: it is not able to put forth one vital act.

It is a great calamity and misery to carry about a dead heart in one’s breast. A man can’t be more effectually dead than to have his heart dead. The
heart is one of the most vital parts; out of that are the issues of life. The life of the whole body proceeds from the heart. And when a man is a dying man, life holds in the heart longest of all. The extreme parts grow stiff and old before the heart, and the last vital act that ceases in the body is the beating of the heart. But he that has a dead heart, is dead with a witness; he is effectually dead. And so is every natural man that carries about with him an heart of stone.

But he that has a tender heart, has a living heart; he has a principle of divine life in his heart. There are vital acts in his heart; his heart beats and pants after God, and from thence proceeds life to the whole man.

2. A tender heart has a yieldable heart. A heart of stone won’t yield; it won’t yield to any impressions, it won’t comply with calls and counsels. Those whose hearts are like a rock, are stiff and incorrigible; nothing will win or draw them, nothing will persuade them.

But they that have an heart of flesh, have a heart pliant to the commands of God, susceptible of good impressions; an heart that may be molded and fashioned according to the gospel mold; an heart ready to yield to God’s authority and ready to bow to his sovereignty.

3. A soft and tender heart is susceptible of divine comforts. A rocky heart is not it. Though it may have false joys, as the stony-ground hearers had, yet no divine joy and comfort can enter into it.

The dews and pleasant showers of heaven won’t enter into a rock. It receives no moisture from it, but remains as dry within as ever. As ‘tis said, the seed that was sown on the stony ground withered because it lacked moisture, Luke 8:6.

So an heart of stone lacks moisture. It can’t receive divine comforts; it will not receive the refreshing showers of divine consolation; it won’t drink in the dews that descend on the mountains of Zion. But when the rock is turned into mellow ground, then it will receive the rain and dew. When God
has broken the heart, then he is wont to pour in the oil of divine comfort, the sweet ointment of the graces of his Spirit.

If we pour perfumed ointment upon an hard rock, it will signify nothing; it will not receive it or drink it in. The rock must first be broken; the heart must be a contrite heart before it will be revived with this healing, blessed oil.

4. A tender heart is a fruitful heart. In vain was the seed sown upon a rock; no fruit was brought to perfection. But when the heart is softened and become tender, it receives the seed, and brings forth the fruit of a holy conversation, fruit that is acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

I conclude with mentioning two or three things that are needful in order to the changing of a rocky heart, that may of direction to you in seeking it.

1. 'Tis needful that you should be sensible of [the] hardness of your hearts. In order to have your heart truly softened, you should see feel that your hearts are like a rock.

Therefore, take heed that you ben’t deceived, that you don’t imagine your hearts to be soft, when indeed they are not.

Consider how unmoved your heart has been, how incorrigible and obstinate, how senseless and obstinate to this day.

2. 'Tis needful that this rock should be broken with the hammer of the law. When God is about to soften an hard heart, 'tis his manner first to begin upon it with the hammer of his holy law. He brings home the awful threatenings and denunciations of wrath in his holy law, as so many hard blows of an hammer upon a rock. The hard heart oftentime long resists those blows, but when God uses the hammer, the rock, hard as it is, can’t always resist it. Though it won’t yield to its blows as a soft or malleable substance, yet at last it will break.
You need to have your heart thus broken. Therefore don’t go about to defend the rock from the blows of this hammer, or to deaden the blow by a covering of earth, but lay your heart open to the law. Persons, when they begin to feel the painful blows of this hammer, are wont to contrive all ways in the world to defend themselves from it, by their duties and affections, and excuses and self-flatterings, but you must have done with those things. The hammer must come home with full force, and you must beg of God to strike home, and never leave till he has broken the rock in pieces.

3. Your heart must be melted with the love of the gospel. The law alone never will soften the heart; the law prepares the way for the gospel. The Word of God is said to be as a fire and as the hammer, Jer. 23:29.

The fire and hammer both work together. One don’t produce the effect alone; the hammer of the law to break, and then the fire to melt. There is first the hammer of God’s wrath, and then the flame of his love, which indeed is the main thing that gives a true softness of heart. It is properly the thing that gives the effect. The law never converts men; it prepares men for conversion. But ‘tis the gospel that, in the hands of God, does the effect the gospel is the power of God to salvation. ‘Tis the flame of God’s love in Christ’s heart that melts the hard heart, and truly turns it into a soft and tender heart, to be to God’s calls and commands and counsels as wax to the seal. Therefore, earnestly pray that your heart may [be] melted in this divine and holy flame.
Notes

1 Edwards’s notations at the head of the sermon indicate that it was originally preach in Nov. 1740, and repreached at Stockbridge in May. 1756.

2 “I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”

3 This is the end of the first preaching unit of sermon booklet no. 3.

4 This is the beginning of the second preaching unit of the sermon. Edwards summarizes the text and major points covered thus far, which is omitted:

Math . 13. 5. 6.
1 How affected .
2. are superficial
3. are dead as a Rock

5 MS: “to him in it he loves it.”

6 MS: “affectial.”